

SARCASTIC, DARK COMEDY

Painted perspectives of reality

Scenes from an Execution, bold expression of artistic truth Review by Barbara Loots

IT SAYS something about the state of our reality when the themes reflected in a 1980s play still cause us to pause and reflect on current day conundrums.

This play, penned by English playwright and theorist Howard Barker, sees the strong-willed, opinionated, promiscuous and just a little too vain Venetian artist, Galactia (dynamically portrayed by Jennifer Steyn), commissioned by the city's committee to paint the 15th-century Battle of Lepanto, to showcase how great and noble the victory was.

When Galactia decides to paint the reality of the battle from a different perspective of the truth - with broken spirits and flesh sliced with no "pretex for elegance" - she is met with great criticism from everyone, ironically everyone except the critics. In confronting her political sponsors as her real critics, the power and value of art as imitation of reality is revealed as it entices emotive reaction from those who stand witness to it.



BATTLES: Nicky Rebelo, Jennifer Steyn, Elizabeth Akudugu, Lauren Blackwell in 'Scenes from an Execution'. Picture: OSCAR O'RYA

eye". A vision which her patron the Doge of Venice (masterfully played by Graham Hopkins) at first praises as "Excellent! Marvellous!", yet later turns against her for that same passionate artistic expression initially so admired.

The play reveals the emotional reactions to the battle (arguably symbolic of all art) to range from positive, heartfelt compassion to the revelation of suppressed menace, depending on the social context of the eyes which look upon it.

daughters are named Supporta and Dementia. Scenes from an Execution is definitely not a comedy. Though, as the artist's vision unfolds and both pride and prejudice is revealed through the sly manoeuvres of the Venetians who all feel it their duty to make every opportunity (no matter how unfortunate) work in their favour, Barker's text reveals a sarcastic,

dark comedy undertone that definitively incites audience reaction. Every single performer on the stage clearly gives it their all in trying to do justice to their characters, and every character is essential, giving voice to a different perspective of reality.

actia and her daughter Supporta. While Galactia is unashamedly a woman carving out her equal rights position among her male peers in the most unapologetic manner, her daughter reminds of a more mainstream feminist who doesn't have insight into her mother's strong-willed position.

In its bold, perhaps deceptively lush, telling of Galactia's revolt against authority, Scene from an Execution is indeed a thought-provoking theatre night out, with great performances by Jennifer Steyn, Lauren Blackwell (Supporta) and Cleo Raatus (Prodo).

Mention must be made of Phoebe Ritchie's beautifully haunting voice as Dementia too. The stand-out performance though has to be Graham Hopkins as Urgentino, the Doge of Venice. The manner in which he gives complexity to such a very superficial character, and makes him almost charming in a kind of off way, is the type of performance that makes this play worth the ticket price and more.

Through his performance and onstage energy he also elevates those of Admiral Suffici (played by Nicky Rebelo with the appropriate degree of misplaced grandeur) and the Critic Rivera (eloquently portrayed by Elizabeth Akudugu). Director Clare Stoford clearly allows her cast to play to their strengths in giving their characters artistic life.

Dressing up dolls to find the inner child

Mary Corrigan

HAIDEE NEL is still dressing dolls. Only now as an adult and artist her "dolls" are large sculptures and their outfits and accessories enable her to play out a psychic hide-and-seek game to discover her inner child.

People pay therapists a fortune for this kind of work. In her latest exhibition, Groeipyne/Growing Pains, at Worldart gallery, she can generate some income from this difficult process. She has packaged her childhood regression into five characters balanced on round

plinths meant to resemble birthday cakes. "It is about a celebration, an awakening of the past. I am playing and exposing myself and discovering myself through play using these dolls," says the Swellendam-based artist.

The figures are a uniform group of girls who function as the elaborate "cake decoration". Their eyes are closed as if locked in a dream. "They are inside themselves, looking inwards," Nel explains.

The display is rewarding in this Cape Town gallery setting, where facing the window, the

group of sculptures appear like oversized toys on display, framed by the Groeipyne/Growing Pains in lights. "I wanted it to appear like a circus show that you are attending."

The show in question is Nel's inner struggle, though it doesn't appear messy and unresolved as you might expect. She has packaged it in such a way for it to be easily consumed. In this way it has purpose, aesthetically and psychically. She relies on familiar references to communicate her insights and conflicts.

A specially-designed pink

bench placed in front of her "show", encourages viewers to take a seat and spend some time looking at her array of characters.

In truth you need time to decode their outfits, as it is through their clothing and accessories that she relays this confrontation with the child self. The outfits are mostly familiar; Double by Dubbeldoor is clearly Red Riding Hood, though this fairytale character has been fused with her nemesis, the wolf.

"We all have this dark side. We are taught to become afraid of it and to suppress it, but it is

natural. If we keep it buried for too long, when it comes out it can appear like a monster," says Nel.

Rabbit hole/Haas Gat refers to Alice in Wonderland. This character wears a mask as does the Row/Row one, a pair of goggles to link up with the boat she is trapped in, referring to the song with the line: "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream". Their headgear acts as a filter through which they view the world. Groeipyne/Growing Pains will show at Worldart gallery, Cape Town until April 27. Mary Corrigan is an art consultant www.corrigan.org



CAKE-LIKE: One of the five characters on display.

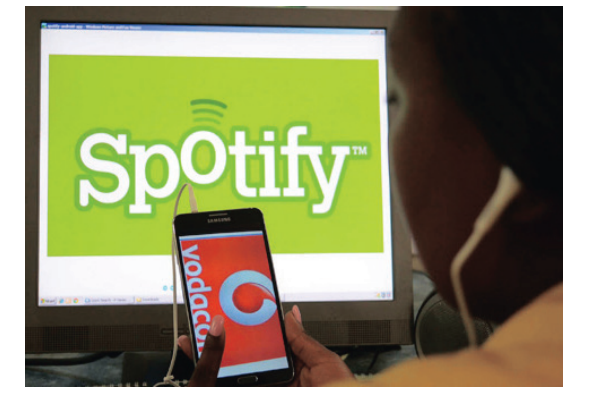
Hearing turned to Cena trivia

DURING a nearly two-hour hearing on the state of small business on Wednesday, Linda McMahon, the newly appointed head of the Small Business Administration, answered questions ranging from government meeting its small business contracting goals to overall transparency.

All pretty boilerplate stuff. That is, until Republican Congressman Rod Blum got his five minutes. "I want to address the 800-pound gorilla in the room that no one has asked you so far," said Blum. "Why did it take John Cena so long to propose marriage to Nikki Bella? And remember you're under oath."

No clue what Blum is talking about? You clearly aren't a WrestleManiac. During last Sunday's WrestleMania 39-year-old Cena got engaged to his long-time girlfriend, fellow wrestler Bella, on television. Despite a few chuckles, McMahon, the former chief executive of World Wrestling Entertainment, provided a blunt response. "You'd have to ask him." - Washington Post

SHOWTIMES FRIDAY 7 APRIL - THURSDAY 13 APRIL. A large grid listing showtimes for various venues including DaySide, Promenade, Eikestad Mall, Parow Centre, and others. Includes show titles like 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Fast & Furious 8', and 'The Boss Baby'.



Successful but indebted: Spotify Ltd Picture: TIMOTHY BERNARD

Spotify considers listing shares

SPOTIFY LTD, owner of the popular music streaming service, is considering listing its shares on public exchanges without raising any new money, according to a source familiar with its plans.

Spotify, which surpassed 50 million paying subscribers earlier this year, doesn't feel the need to raise capital but wants to allow long-term investors and employees to cash out, says the source, who asked not to be identified.

A direct listing would address those needs by letting investors buy Spotify shares from current owners on the open market. That approach would be different from an initial public offering, the more traditional route hot tech start-ups use to go public and raise money at the same time.

Spotify, founded more than a decade ago by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon, raised \$1 billion in debt two years ago, the same year its revenue surpassed \$2bn.

The company is eager to escape the burden of that debt, a convertible loan that will cost the company more money the longer it delays going public. Spotify was valued at \$8.5bn at the time of the loan.

In a traditional IPO, a company offers a block of stock to new investors the night before they are available on public markets for a price determined by underwriters.

In a direct listing, Spotify wouldn't raise money or use underwriters and it would help Spotify avoid some of the fees and hassle of an IPO, and wouldn't have to dilute the existing shares.

MergerMarket previously reported on Spotify's consideration of a direct offering. Spotify planned to go public this year and may still, though the company's concern about the costs could lead it to delay an IPO.

Spotify has yet to report a profit, partly because the majority of its sales go to the record labels and rights holders of songs in its library.

Earlier last week, Spotify signed a new long-term licensing deal with Universal Music Group that may grant the company some relief.

It has yet to reach long-term accords with the two other major labels, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group. - Bloomberg

ARTSCAPE THEATRE CENTRE. THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT. 10, 11, 12 & 13 April 2017. 12 April 2017 @ 12:30. THE PAPER EDITION - GROUP EXHIBITION. Available for public viewing from 4 - 13 April 2017.

Autumn Symphony Season. Cape Town City Hall, Thursday 13 April, 20:00. Conductor: Daniel Boico. Soloists: Petronella Malan (piano). JS Bach / Stokowski Toccata & Fugue in D minor. Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5, 'Emperor'. Mahler Symphony No. 1, 'Titan'.

New Apostolic Church. wishes fellow Christians a blessed Passion Week. 'Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.'

New Apostolic Church. Good Friday on 14 April 2017 and Easter Sunday on 16 April 2017 will be celebrated with divine services in all New Apostolic Church congregations at 09h00. All are welcome to come and worship with us! For further information contact Kenny Kotze at 021 700 2200 or visit our website at www.nac-sa.org.za